1

Start Right Here
AFTER COMPLETING THIS CHAPTER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

1.1 Discuss the nature of “communication presence.”
1.2 Define communication.
1.3 Explain the essential elements of communication and their interaction.
1.4 Use a transactional model of communication to visualize the communication process in action.
1.5 Describe the core principles of good communication.
1.6 Evaluate the benefits of communicating effectively.
1.7 Apply skills for improving your communication effectiveness.

Be brutally honest. Do you spend any of your free time thinking about communication? More specifically, have you ever imagined the words others might choose to describe you as a communicator? Take a moment and do that now. After engaging in conversation with you, might others say that you were present or distracted, authentic or fake, empathetic or distant? How are they likely to describe your behavior as a coworker or team member? Might they see you as cooperative and collaborative, or would they instead judge you to be self-concerned and a blocker? What words might those in an audience you were speaking to use to describe your speech-making abilities? Would they find you prepared and persuasive or ill prepared and uninspiring? And when roles were switched, how might other speakers describe you as a member of their audience? Might they report that you were attentive and encouraging, or would they perceive you to be bored or “out-to-lunch”? In each case, the adjectives others attribute to you, how you come across to them, are your communication presence.

Our goal is to help you make communication work as effectively as you can in all the social and professional settings you frequent, whether you are engaging with others online or face-to-face. With this in mind, welcome to The Communication Playbook, your resource for communication skills for life and career success.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION PRESENCE?

We 21st-century communicators face complex challenges. Each of us bears personal and social responsibility for developing, sharing, and then managing a unique identity or...
communication presence—the composite of characteristics we present both in the physical and online world. Effectively, we each create a real-world or face-to-face identity and a digital-world or virtual identity for others to consume. It is as we navigate between these two spaces—the physical and the digital—that the unique personal communication presence that others attribute to us when we interact with them, both online and offline takes shape, and it speaks volumes.

How others in both the physical and digital world perceive our communication presence affects their opinions of us and our relationships with them. The objective, of course, is for our communication presence to be positive, authentic, and serve as a success catalyst.

Becoming adept at connecting with others, whether they are actually present or digitally dispersed, is one skill we all should want to master. We should want to present ourselves as competently and confidently as possible in the communication arenas we frequent daily, regardless of whether we happen to be physically in the same space or are using social media.

**SKILL BUILDER**

**Wi-Fi Me (It’s Not a Question)**

Based solely on the name of your Wi-Fi network, what impressions might others form of you?

In an effort to influence others’ reactions, Wi-Fi network names have morphed from boring series of digits to personalized monikers much like vanity license plates.

Choose a Wi-Fi name that you believe will reveal to others something they may not know about you. For example, one ballet dance instructor branded her Wi-Fi network “PointToMe.” What will you brand yours? What do you think your brand communicates about you?

**COMMUNICATION CHOICES ARE ABUNDANT**

We have an abundance of communication options today. To be sure, various means of communicating become more popular than others at different times in our lives. For example, for many of us texting is the dominant form of interaction. But for better or worse, our communication choices evolve. The question is: *Do we make sound decisions about how to communicate most effectively and appropriately with others?*

Once we understand what makes communication work across the spectrum of communication channels available to us, we will know how to make it work for us. Ultimately, because the communication presence we present and share in social, civic, and professional arenas and personal, group, organizational, and public settings affects our relationships, our ability to engage with others, and our life satisfaction, we can never become too effective at communicating.
COMMUNICATION PRESENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

What is your personal “go-to” means of communicating? If you’re like many 21st-century students, your smartphone serves as your prime personal connector. You likely use it to check Facebook, text, tweet, or post on Instagram—but rarely make a phone call. For some people, actually talking to another person causes discomfort. Such individuals find technology freeing, because they don’t have to be in the physical presence of others. They feel able to say what they want without fear of being interrupted or even having to listen to another’s response.

Are We Addicted?

Although we sometimes discount communicating face-to-face or forget it altogether, doing so effectively is equally, if not more, important than connecting through technology. Despite this, in a 2015 Pew Research Center study, 89% of smartphone owners reported using their phones during the last social gathering they attended. They also reported that they were not happy about it because it impeded conversation.3

A few years back, a YouTube video titled “I Forgot My Phone” went viral. By now, the video has been viewed more than 50 million times. At the video’s start, we see a couple in bed. The woman stares into space while her boyfriend focuses on his smartphone. The scenes that follow show the woman in the midst of a series of dystopian situations. Her friends ignore her and stare at their phones during lunch. Concertgoers are too busy recording the performance to enjoy it. The guest of honor at a birthday party takes selfies while his friends sing. The last scene finds the couple back in bed. Her boyfriend is still phone obsessed.

Are we addicted to smartphones and social media? According to research, we well might be captives of our devices. Many of us use our phones more than we even imagine we do. In fact, when asked to estimate their smartphone usage, participants estimated an average of 37 uses daily. The actual number was about 85 times daily, or once every 11 minutes of your typical waking day. The duration of use was 5.05 hours, including phone calls and listening to music.4

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are hypnotically compelling for many of us, in part because they deliver unscheduled “variable rewards”—much like slot machines do. Messages, alerts, notifications, photos, and “likes” are sent to us randomly, making it virtually impossible for us not to react to them. They induce large numbers of us to become compulsive site checkers looking for a dopamine boost—almost as if we were seeking a fix.

The Upshot

What is the future of person-to-person conversation as texting replaces talking? We have to be able to connect both remotely and in-person, in a social or professional network, or in a
social or professional circle. Whenever and wherever we connect, the goal is to make communication work—and that is the primary goal of this book.

**HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

What will it take to make communication work for you?

Neither job-specific talent, nor technical expertise, nor graduating from college alone will guarantee you upward mobility or the attainment of goals. In fact, many of us get our jobs because of our social capital, rather than our human capital—the people we know, not what we know. This might be because, although our communities and workplaces are prime environments for connecting with others, the Internet makes it relatively easy today to find out anything we don’t know.

**THE COMMUNICATION—SUCCESS CONNECTION**

What differentiates people who ascend both personal and professional ladders of success from those who do not? The answer is superior communication skills.

Among the top 10 skills employers seek when hiring college graduates is the ability to communicate with others both inside and outside of the organization. Although not guaranteed, people with good communication skills are more likely to be promoted rapidly, be happy in relationships, and believe their lives are rich and fulfilling. Whatever your age, sex, marital status, or employment history, it is never too late to learn skills that will enrich and improve your career and life.

We are not born knowing how to make communication work. We learn and develop communication skills. If you want to improve your ability to relate to people in your social life, job, or academic life, now is the time to start making communication work better for you!

**WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?**

We are all communicators. We engage in intrapersonal (with ourselves), dyadic (one-to-one), small-group (one to a few), public (one to many), and mass communication (communicating messages that are shared across great distances with potentially large audiences through a technological device or mass medium). We also engage in computer-assisted or online communication.

**DEFINING COMMUNICATION**

Every time we knowingly or unknowingly send a verbal or nonverbal message to anyone, communication takes place. We define communication as the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning. It is the process that occurs whenever someone observes or experiences behavior and attributes meaning to that behavior. As long as what someone does or says is interpreted as a message—as long as the behavior of one person affects or influences that...
behavior of another—communication is occurring. Communication is our link to the rest of humanity and serves a number of purposes.

Which of the following quotations, if any, do you find most applicable to your own communication experiences?

- Talk and change the world. (Slogan of a group of U.S. senators who happened to be female)
- Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill. (Buddha)
- We all need people who will give us feedback. That’s how we improve. (Bill Gates)
- The best way to solve problems and fight against war is through dialogue. (Malala Yousafzai)
- Two monologues do not make a dialogue. (Jeff Daly)

What would you say?

**TYPES OF COMMUNICATION**

Because our focus is communication, we need to distinguish among the types of communication we use.

- During **intrapersonal communication**, we think about, talk with, learn about, reason with, and evaluate ourselves. We listen and interact with the voice in our head.

- When we engage in **interpersonal** (or dyadic) communication, we interact with another, learn about him or her, and act in ways that help sustain or terminate our relationship.

- When we participate in **group communication**, we interact with a limited number of others, work to share information, develop ideas, make decisions, solve problems, offer support, or have fun. Every person in a group can actively participate with others in the group.

- **Organizational communication** is conducted with larger, more stable collections of people who work together to achieve the organization’s goals. Organizations include corporations, nonprofits, entertainment, sports, health operations, and political, religious, and charitable groups.

- Through **public communication**, we inform others. We also persuade the members of various audiences to hold certain attitudes, values, or beliefs so that they will think, believe, or act in a particular way. We also function as members of different audiences, in which case another person will do the same for us.
• During **mass communication**, the media entertain, inform, and persuade us. Messages are sent to large dispersed audiences using electronic and print media. We, in turn, have the ability to use our viewing and buying habits to influence the media.

• When engaged with **digital and social media**, we navigate cyberspace as we converse, research, exchange ideas, and build relationships with others using computers and the Internet. Social media are more personal than the mass media. The size of the intended audience in social media varies, and the communication itself can be more interactive.

**SKILL BUILDER**

**Communication Self-Assessment and Future Me**

Identify five individuals with whom you shared a sustained conversation during the past 7 days. For each person you name, indicate the **nature of your relationship** (e.g., was the person your instructor, parent, boss, friend, or significant other?), the **context** in which the interaction occurred (was it a classroom, office, home, or restaurant?), the **channel(s)** used to communicate the messages that were sent and received (did you communicate face-to-face, e-mail, phone, text, or via social media?), and the **outcome** of the exchange (what happened as a result of your communicating?).

Finally, and this is most important, evaluate your communication effectiveness in each interaction by rating it on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents extremely ineffective and 5 represents extremely effective, giving your reasons for each rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Rating With Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reviewing your self-evaluations, how would you replay any of the preceding interactions if given the opportunity? Be specific. For example, might you opt not to text while walking down a street with a friend? Would you decide not to answer your phone when dining with a coworker?

If it were up to you, would you opt to increase or decrease the number of online versus face-to-face interactions that you shared? Why?
ESSENTIALS OF COMMUNICATION

Whatever the nature or type of communication in which we are involved, the communication act itself is characterized by the interplay of seven elements. All communication interactions have these common elements that together help define the communication process. The better you understand these components, the easier it becomes for you to develop your own communicative abilities. Let’s begin by examining the essentials of communication, those elements present during every communication event.

PEOPLE

Obviously, human communication involves people. Interpersonal, small-group, and public communication encounters take place between and among all types of senders (people who encode and send out messages) and receivers (people who take in messages and decode). Although it is easy to picture a communication experience beginning with a sender and ending with a receiver, it is important to understand that during communication the role of sender does not belong exclusively to one person and role of receiver to another. Instead, the processes of sending and receiving occur simultaneously. Even if only one person is speaking, others can communicate through facial expression, attentiveness, or raising a hand to ask a question.

MESSAGES

A message is the content of a communicative act. During every communication act, we all send and receive verbal and nonverbal messages. What you talk about, the words you use to express your thoughts and feelings, the sounds you make, the way you sit and gesture, your facial expressions, and perhaps even your touch or your smell all communicate information.

Some messages we send are private (a kiss accompanied by “I love you”); others are public and may be directed at hundreds or thousands of people. We send some messages purposefully (“I want you to know . . .”) and others accidentally (“I had no clue you were watching . . . or ‘lurking’”).

Everything a sender or receiver does or says is a potential message as long as someone is there to interpret it.

CHANNELS

Channels are the media we use to carry messages. We classify channels according to which of our senses carries or receives the message, whether the message is being delivered verbally, nonverbally,
or both, and the primary means of communication we use to deliver the message, that is, whether we use face-to-face interaction, text messaging, or a mass medium such as television or a podcast.

We are multichanneled communicators. We receive sound messages (we hear noises from the street), sight messages (we size up how someone looks), taste messages (we enjoy the flavor of a particular food), smell messages (we like the scent of a friend’s perfume), and touch messages (we feel the roughness of a fabric).

Which channel are you most attuned to? To what extent do you rely on one or more channels while excluding or ignoring others? Effective communicators are adept channel switchers. They recognize that communication is a multichannel experience. The following dialogue between a husband and wife illustrates the multichannel nature of communication:

**Wife:** Jim, you’re late again. Is that a drink I smell on your breath? Now, we’ll never get to the Adams’ on time.

**Husband:** No, I didn’t stop for a drink. You must be smelling what’s left of my cologne. I tried my best to be on time (places a consoling hand on her shoulder).

**Wife:** (Sarcastically) Sure, you tried your best. (Drawing away and shaking her finger) I’m not going to put up with this much longer. My job is every bit as demanding as yours, you know.

**Husband:** (Lowering his voice) Ok. Ok. I know you work hard, too. I don’t question that. Listen, I really did get stuck in a conference. (Smiles at her) Let’s not blow this up. I’ll tell you about it on the way to Bill and Ellen’s.

What message is the wife (the initial source-encoder) sending to her husband (the receiver-decoder)? She is letting him know with her words, her voice, and her physical actions that she is upset and angry. Her husband responds in kind, using words, vocal cues, and gestures in an effort to explain his behavior. Both are affected by the nature of the situation (they are late for an appointment), by their attitudes (how they feel about what’s happened), and by their past experiences.

**NOISE**

In the context of communication, **noise** is anything that interferes with or distorts our ability to send or receive messages. Although we are accustomed to thinking of noise as particular sound or group of sounds, noise can have both internal and external causes. Internal noise is attributed to a communicator’s psychological makeup, intellectual ability, or physical condition. External noise is attributed to the environment. Thus, noise includes distractions such as a loud siren, a disturbing odor, and a hot room; personal factors such as prejudices,
daydreaming, and feelings of inadequacy; and semantic factors such as uncertainty about what another person’s words are supposed to mean.

**CONTEXT**

Communication always takes place in a context, or setting. Sometimes a context is so natural that we barely notice it. At other times, however, the context exerts considerable control over our behavior. Would your behavior be the same at a friend’s 21st birthday party and at a baby shower? Both are parties, but the context is different. Consider how your present environment affects the way you act toward others. Also, consider the extent to which certain environments might cause you to alter your posture, manner of speaking, attire, or means of interacting.

**FEEDBACK**

Whenever we communicate, we receive feedback in return. The verbal and nonverbal cues that we perceive in reaction to our communication function as feedback. Feedback tells us how we are coming across. A smile, a frown, a chuckle, a sarcastic remark, a muttered thought, or simply silence in response to something we do or say can cause us to change, continue, or end a communication exchange.

Feedback that encourages us to continue behaving as we are is positive feedback; it enhances behavior in progress. In contrast, negative feedback extinguishes a behavior; it serves a corrective rather than a reinforcing function. Note that the terms positive and negative should not be interpreted as “good” and “bad”; these labels simply reflect the way the responses affect behavior.

Both positive and negative feedback can emanate from internal or external sources. Internal feedback is feedback you give yourself as you monitor your own communicative behavior. External feedback is feedback from others who are involved in the communication event. To be an effective communicator, you must be sensitive to both types of feedback.

**EFFECT**

As we communicate, we are changed in some way by the interaction. Communication has an effect and can be viewed as an exchange of influences.

An effect can be emotional, physical, cognitive, or any combination of the three. Communication can elicit feelings of joy, anger, or sadness (emotional); it can cause you to fight, argue, become apathetic, or evade an issue (physical); or it can lead to new insights, increased knowledge, the formulation or reconsideration of opinions, silence, or confusion (cognitive). Some effects are not always visible or immediately observable. Effects can be delayed.

**VISUALIZING THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN ACTION**

Through communication, we share meaning with others by sending and receiving messages—sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. Thus, communication
includes every element that could affect two or more people as they knowingly or unwittingly relate to one another. At this point, we need to reiterate that communication occurs whenever one person assigns significance or meaning to another’s behavior. But, you might ask, will knowing this enable you to understand or establish better and more satisfying relationships with your friends, significant other, employer, parents? The answer is yes! If you understand the processes that permit people to contact and influence each other, if you understand the forces that can impede or foster the development of every kind of effective communication, then you stand a better chance of communicating effectively yourself.

A TRANSACTIONAL MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

Now that we have examined the basic elements of communication, we are ready to see how we can use a picture, or transactional model, of the communication process to reflect our understanding of communication in action. A model is a useful tool in discovering how communication operates and in examining your own communication encounters.

The model of communication in Figure 1.1 is a transactional one. A transactional communication model depicts communication as a continuous circle with sending and receiving as simultaneous rather than separate acts. Such a model enables us to visualize the vital complexity and dynamic nature of communication. Each person in the model is pictured sending and receiving messages (including feedback) through one or more channels at the same time as the other, because they both have sending and receiving responsibilities and their messages will build upon and affect one another.

Each person’s field of experience—their culture, past experiences, education, biases, and heredity— influences the interaction. Of consequence is the extent to which their fields of experience overlap. In theory, the more individuals communicate with each other, the more overlap they create.

FIGURE 1.1
Gamble and Gamble’s Model of Communication

Context/Environment

Functions as source and receiver simultaneously

A’s field of experience

Message/Channel

B’s field of experience

Feedback

Noise

Shared field of experience

SIR
In addition, we see that noise can enter the interaction at any point—it can pop up in the message, be present in the channel, come from one’s field of experience, or derive from the context. Such noise can affect the sending and/or the receiving abilities and effectiveness of the communicators.

Every interaction we have with another has an impact on our future interactions with that person and potentially with others.

HOW GOOD A COMMUNICATOR ARE YOU?

Simply communicating frequently does not mean that you are as effective a communicator as you could be. Too often, we neglect problems with our communicative relationships. When we either lack empathy or fail to consider the feelings of others, our relationships suffer.

There is no such thing as being too effective at establishing maintaining and controlling personal and public contacts with others. Being mindful of the principles discussed in this section can help you to improve your communication skills.

COMMUNICATION IS DYNAMIC

When we call communication a dynamic process, we mean that all its elements constantly interact with and affect each other. Because we are interconnected, whatever happens to one person determines in part what happens to others.

Relationships evolve. Nothing about communication is static. Everything is accumulative. We communicate as long as we are alive. Thus, every interaction we engage in is part of a series of connected happenings. Present communication experiences can be thought of as points of arrival from past encounters and as points of departure for future ones. Do your experiences support this?

COMMUNICATION IS UNREPEATABLE AND IRREVERSIBLE

Every human contact we experience is unique. It has never happened before and will never again happen in just the same way. Our interpretation of the adage “You can never step into the same river twice” is that the experience changes both you and the river forever. A communication encounter similarly affects and changes people so that one encounter can never occur exactly in the same way a second time.

In addition to being unrepeatable, communication is also irreversible. We cannot take back something we have said or tweeted any more than we can erase the effects of something we have done. Just as toothpaste cannot be squeezed back into a tube, the e-mails, texts, and tweets we send are going to be out there forever.

When has the unrepeatable and irreversible nature of communication caused you a problem?
COMMUNICATION HAS NO OPPOSITE

We often assume that communication is purposeful and that we communicate only because we want to. Although this sometimes is true, it is also true that sometimes we communicate without any awareness of doing so—and just as often, even without wanting to.

Whenever we are involved in an interaction, we respond in some way. Even if we choose not to respond verbally, even if we maintain absolute silence and attempt not to move a muscle, our lack of response is itself a response; it constitutes a message, influences others, and communicates. We can never stop behavior—because behavior has no opposite. No matter how hard we try, we cannot not communicate, because all behavior is communication and therefore is a message.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY

Focus on Hate

Years ago, researcher Gordon Allport wrote the following in his now classic *The Nature of Prejudice*:

See that man over there?  
Yes.  
Well, I hate him.  
But you don’t know him.  
That’s why I hate him.

Although Allport wrote this long ago, his observations remain true today and are being magnified by social media. To what extent do you believe that enhanced understanding can help resolve this? Why does a lack of knowledge or familiarity help breed hate? Why might some people experience “hate” when encountering individuals from a new or unfamiliar culture or group?
CULTURE INFLUENCES COMMUNICATION

As we will learn in Chapter 2, how we formulate and interpret messages depends on our culture. Cultural diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, and age, influences the meanings we attribute to communication. Cultural differences exist not only between people who speak different languages but also between people who speak the same language. Every cultural group has its own rules or preferences for interaction. When these are unknown or ignored, we are apt to misinterpret the meaning of messages received and miscalculate the impact of messages sent.

GENDER INFLUENCES COMMUNICATION

“To be an ‘I’ at all means to be gendered.” Our culture shapes our conceptions of gender, and conceptions of gender shape our communication. We learn socially accepted variations in the definitions of gender differences as we grow up. Girls, for example, learn to “play nice.” Boys learn to act tough. Gender is a relational construct with individuals promoting the gender ideologies they accept.

To what extent do you believe that your communication has been influenced by gender constructions or restrictions and what society considers “normal”?

PERSONAL ETHICS INFLUENCE COMMUNICATION

Every time we communicate, we decide implicitly or explicitly if we will do so ethically. Ethics are the moral principles, values, and beliefs that members of society use to guide behavior. Since communication has consequences, it involves judgments of right and wrong. When the agreed-upon standards of behavior are violated, the behavior is judged unethical. For example, most of us expect those with whom we interact to be honest, play fair, respect our rights, and accept responsibility for their actions.

COMMUNICATION IS COMPETENCE BASED

A communication scholar once said that if communication can fail, it will. Our challenge is determining how we can prevent communication from failing. One solution is to make wise choices. In certain situations, some messages are appropriate and okay to say to particular receivers, whereas others are not.

Even though we all have different communication strengths and weaknesses, we can all benefit from getting better at communicating. When we add to our knowledge and make a commitment to develop the skills to apply that knowledge across an array of communication situations or contexts, we gain communication competence. For example, included among
The skills necessary for effective communication is the ability to think critically. When we think critically, we have the ability to examine ideas reflectively and to decide what we should and should not believe, think, or do, given a specific set of circumstances.10

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE TRANSFORMING COMMUNICATION

Decades ago, media critic Marshall McLuhan cautioned, “The medium is the message.”11 In McLuhan’s view, different channels of communication affected both how a sender encoded a message and how a receiver responded to it. This means that the same words delivered face-to-face, on paper, via text, or with a tweet do not constitute the same message. The channel of communication changes things. What channel would you use to say good-bye to someone who was moving away? Which channel would you use to tell someone “I’m sorry?” What about “I love you?”

New communication forms—new channels—alter our communication experiences. Technology and social media are game changers. Using them speeds up communication. Instead of valuing sequential understanding and careful logic, we seek immediate gratification and emotional involvement with people near and distant, close to home and around the world. As our real and virtual communication repertoires expand, we exist simultaneously both in the physical world and online.

Living Brands

Do you know anyone whose life has become a brand? A 2017 film, Ingrid Goes West, satirized the sometimes very painful ways in which social media impact lives.12 In the film Ingrid goes into a rage after seeing photos online of a wedding to which she wasn’t invited. A loner, she turns her life on its head by traveling to Los Angeles and reinventing herself into the image of her Instagram obsession, Taylor, a person who posts perfectly posed photos of herself along with inspirational quotes and has gazillions of followers.

Now, who would you rather be: Ingrid or Taylor? The devoted follower or the influencer? Has a filtered life that you have observed ever made you green with envy?

Changes Have Upsides and Downsides

The changes in how we communicate affect our social, emotional, and professional lives. On the upside, they influence our cultural sensibilities, making it easier for many among us to identify like-minded people who share our interests. On the downside, they make it less likely that we will expose ourselves to different points of view. Also on the downside, they make it possible for us to remain anonymous or to disguise ourselves. But on the upside, if
we do remain anonymous, our online communication will be evaluated more for what we write than for how we look. On the downside, again, social media allow us to present our lives through filters—delivering a carefully curated image of ourselves to the world—but then again, those filters can be humorous too.\textsuperscript{13}

Social media reshape human consciousness and relationships. Because there are only so many hours in a day, the time we spend using social media takes time away from other activities. Social media impede our living “in the moment.” Rather than enjoying the company of others or an event or celebration, we tweet, use Snapchat, or check Facebook. They also foster our dependency on others—we wait anxiously to see if our post will receive approval and affirmation.\textsuperscript{14} On the other hand, they do make it more possible for marginalized groups to find support. They have upsides and downsides, downsides and upsides.

Being a communicator in a digital age adds multiple layers to our communication experiences. For one thing, our messages become more permanent. For another, ethically challenged individuals can troll our pages, hack into our files, make our private messages public, and forward to other people something that we had no intention of communicating to them. What happens online influences offline realities.

\section*{WHY DO WE COMMUNICATE?}

Every communication experience serves one or more functions. For example, communication can help us discover who we are, help us establish more meaningful personal and professional relationships, or prompt us to examine and try to change either our own attitudes and behaviors or the attitudes and behaviors of others.

\subsection*{TO GAIN SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND INSIGHT INTO OTHERS}

One key function of communication is self–other understanding: insight into ourselves and others. When we get to know another person, we also get to know ourselves and when we get to know ourselves, we learn how others affect us. We depend on communication to develop self-awareness.

We need feedback from others all the time, and others are constantly in need of feedback from us. Interpersonal, small-group, public, and mediated and digital communication offer us numerous opportunities for self–other discovery. Through communication encounters we are able to learn why we are trusting or untrusting, whether we can make our thoughts and feelings clear, under what conditions we have the power to influence others, and whether we can effectively make decisions and resolve conflicts and problems.

Modern communicators need to be able to interact with people culturally different from themselves. Although it might be feasible in the virtual world to seek comfort in similarity, insulating ourselves from intercultural contact in our social networks, communities, and workplaces is neither possible nor desirable. It is through communication that we reveal to others what is important to us and what we stand for.
TO FORM MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

In building relationships, we cannot be overly concerned with ourselves but must consider the needs and wants of others. It is through effective communication that our basic physical and social needs are met.

Psychologists tell us that we need other people just as we need water, food, and shelter. When we are cut off from human contact, we become disoriented and maladjusted, and our life itself may be placed in jeopardy. People who are isolated from others—people who lack satisfying social relationships—are more likely to experience health problems and to die earlier than those who have an abundance of satisfying relationships.

Communication offers each of us the chance to satisfy what psychologist William Schutz calls our “needs for inclusion, control, and affection.”¹⁵ The need for inclusion is our need to be with others, our need for social contact. We like to feel that others accept and value us, and we want to feel like a full partner in a relationship. The need for control is our need to feel that we are capable and responsible, that we are able to deal with and manage our environment. We also like to feel that we can influence others. The need for affection is our need to express and receive love. Because communication allows each of these needs to be met, we are less likely to feel unwanted, unloved, or incapable if we are able to communicate meaningfully with others.

Communication also gives us the chance to share our personal reality with people from our own and different cultures. Whether we live in an East Coast urban area, a southern city, a desert community, a home in sunny California, a village in Asia, a plain in Africa, or a town in the Middle East, we all engage in similar activities when we communicate. We may use different symbols, rely on different strategies, and desire different outcomes, but the processes we use and the motivations we have are strikingly alike. Equally significant is the fact that insensitivity to another’s needs and preferred ways of interacting can hamper our ability to relate effectively.

TO INFLUENCE OTHERS

During all kinds of communication, we have ample opportunities to influence each other subtly or overtly. We spend a great deal of time trying to persuade others to think as we think, do what we do, like what we like. Sometimes our efforts meet with success. In any case our experiences with persuasion afford each of us the chance to influence others so that we may try to realize our personal and professional goals.

FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Employers are concerned about the lack of communication skills in new hires. In fact, most are less concerned about technical skills and more concerned with the abilities of potential
employees to relate to and engage with others in the workplace. Among the perennial complaints of employers are the poor written communication and presentation abilities of applicants, along with their lack of interpersonal skills. Employers report that recent college graduates tend to ramble when asked to explain something, have difficulty making a point, and are prone to sending e-mails and texts that are far too casual for the professional world.

As we noted earlier in this chapter, a positive relationship exists between the ability to communicate and career success. Employers seek to hire those who know how to make communication work. If you develop the ability to speak so that others listen, listen when others speak, critically evaluate what you read and hear, adapt to differences in cultural perspectives, handle conflicts and solve problems, and make sound decisions, then you will exhibit skills valued by employers.

**CAREER BUILDER: PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES AND FUTURE ME**

1. Using what you have learned to this point, explain what you think distinguishes an effective communicator in the workplace from a poor one.
2. Elaborate on how improving a specific communication skill could benefit you professionally in the future.
3. Identify the pros and cons of virtual versus face-to-face workplace interactions.
4. Explain how improving communication skills will enable you to make a difference in your workplace.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**Practice Effective Communication**

The primary purpose of this book is to help you gain an understanding of communication and to assist you in developing your interpersonal, small-group, public, and digital and social media skills. Engaging with the following tasks will give you a great start.

**Become actively involved in studying communication.**

Once you commit to putting the principles we discuss into practice, you are on your way to becoming a better communicator. Use the learning objectives in this text to clarify your personal communication objectives. Use the embedded self-assessments and boxed features to further explore what you must know and do to become a more effective communicator.

**Make the effort to increase both your self-awareness and your awareness of others by developing the following assets.**

- An appreciation of the extent to which gender, culture, and digital and social media affect communication
- The capacity to listen to and process information
• Sensitivity to silent messages that you and others send
• Knowledge of how words affect us
• An understanding of how relationships develop
• A realization of how feelings and emotions affect relationships
• The ability to disagree without being disagreeable
• An understanding of how beliefs, values, and attitudes affect the formulation and reception of messages and the development of speaker-audience relationships

Believe in yourself.
Above all else, you need to believe that you are worth the time and effort required to develop your communication skills. You also need to believe that developing these skills will improve the quality of your life immeasurably.
Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.

Brian Tracy

COMPLETE THIS CHAPTER 1 CHECKLIST

1.1 I can discuss the nature of communication presence. □
Communication presence is the composite of characteristics we present both in the physical and online world. Effectively, we each create a real-world or face-to-face identity and a digital-world or virtual identity for others to consume.

1.2 I can define communication. □
Communication is the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning. Human communication takes place interpersonally (one-to-one), in small groups (one to a few), in public forums (one to many), and via digital and social media.

1.3 I can explain the essential elements of communication and their interaction. □
The essential elements of communication are people, messages, channels, noise, context, feedback, and effects. A transactional model of communication illustrates the communication process in action.

1.4 I can use a transactional communication model to visualize the communication process in action. □
A transactional communication model depicts communication as a continuous circle with sending and receiving as simultaneous rather than separate acts, helping us to visualize the vital complexity and dynamic nature of communication.

1.5 I can describe the core principles of good communication. □
Communication reflects a number of general principles. First, because communication is a dynamic process, each interaction is part of a series of interconnected communication events. Second, every communication experience is unique, unrepeatable, and irreversible. Third, behavior has no opposite. Fourth, culture influences communication. Fifth, ethics influence communication. Sixth, communication is competence based.

1.6 I can evaluate the benefits of communicating effectively. □
Effective communication promotes self–other understanding, helps us establish meaningful relationships, enables us to examine and attempt to change the attitudes and behaviors of others, and enhances career development. Developing communication skills is a lifelong process. This book explains the strategies you can use to assess your communication abilities, improve the effectiveness of your communication relationships, and enhance the quality of your life.
I can apply skills for improving my communication effectiveness. Once you become involved in the study of communication, commit to setting and tracking personal goals, and demonstrate belief in yourself, you are on the road to mastering communication skills to last a lifetime.

BECOME A WORD MASTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>channels</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication presence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>context</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digital and social media</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essentials of communication</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethics</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human capital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpersonal communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intrapersonal communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mass communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>message</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need for affection</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need for control</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need for inclusion</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizational communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receivers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senders</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social capital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transactional communication</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>model</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>